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# PISTOLS FOR TWO

BY  
OWEN HATTERAS

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## PISTOLS FOR TWO

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### I

**B**IOGRAPHY fails, like psychology, because it so often mistakes complexity for illumination. Its aim is to present a complete picture of a man; its effect is usually to make an impenetrable mystery of him. The cause of this, it seems to me, lies in the fact that the biographer always tries to explain him utterly, to account for him in every detail, to give an unbroken coherence to all his acts and ideas. The result is a wax dummy, as smooth as glass but as unalive as a dill pickle.

It is by no such process of exhaustion that we get our notions of the people we really know. We see them, not as complete images, but as processions of flashing points. Their personalities, so to speak, are not revealed brilliantly and in the altogether, but as shy things that peep out, now and then, from inscrutable swathings, giving us a hint, a suggestion, a moment of understanding. Does a man really know what is going on in his wife's mind? Not if she *has* a mind. What he knows is only that infinitesimal part which she reveals, sometimes deliberately and even truculently, but more often naïvely, surreptitiously, accidentally. He judges her as a human being, not by anything approaching entire knowledge of her, but by bold and scattered inferences. He sees her soul, in so far as he sees it at all, in the way she buttons her boots, in the way she intrigues for a kiss, in the way she snaps her eye at him when he has been naughty —

he interprets her ego in terms of her taste in ribbons, the scent of her hair, her quarrels with her sisters, her fashion of eating artichokes, her skill at home millinery, the débris on her dressing table, her preferences in the theater, her care of her teeth.

Thus, by slow degrees, he accumulates an image of her — an image changing incessantly, and never more than half sensed. After long years, perhaps, he begins to know her after a fashion. That is, he knows how many shredded wheat biscuits she likes for breakfast, how much of his business she understands, how long she can read a first-class novel without napping, what she thinks of woolen underwear, the New Irish Movement, the family doctor, soft-boiled eggs, and God. . . .

I enter upon these considerations because I have been employed by a committee of *aluminados*, heeled well enough to pay my honorarium, to conjure up recognizable images of MM. George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken, that their scattered partisans and the public generally may see them more clearly. The job has its difficulties, for save in their joint editorial concern with *The Smart Set* magazine and their common antipathy to certain prevailing sophistries, they are no more alike than a hawk and a handsaw. But in one other thing, at least, they also coalesce, and that is in the paucity of news about them. Most other magazine editors are constantly in the papers — discoursing on the literary art, agitating for this or that, getting themselves interviewed. These twain, however, pursue a more *pianissimo* course, and so not much is known about them, even inaccurately. . . .

## II

The job invites. One reads regularly what magazine editors think of their contributors, but who ever reads what magazine contributors — of whom I, Hatteras, am

one — think of their editors? A vast and adventurous field here enrolls itself, believe me. I know, more or less intimately, most of the editors of the great American periodicals, and I am constantly amused by the inaccuracy of the prevailing notions about them — notions diligently fostered, in many cases, by their own more or less subtle chicane. Consider, for example, the dean of the order, M. George Harvey, of the *North American Review*. His portrait shows a thoughtful old gentleman reading a book, his forefinger pressed affectionately against his right frontal sinus. Recalling the high mental pressure of his daily concerns, one concludes at once that he is struggling through Talboys Wheeler's epitome of the Maha-Bhārāta, or Locke's "Conduct of the Understanding." But I have it from the Colonel himself — a confidence quite spontaneous and apparently sincere — that at the precise moment the photographer squeezed the bird he was thinking — what? Simply this: how much prettier Mlle. Mary Pickford would be if her lower limbs were less richly developed laterally. The book was the *Photoplay Magazine*.

Again, there is M. Robert H. Davis, editor of the Munsey publications. The official views of M. Davis depict him as a man of the great outdoors, a stalker of the superior carnivora, a dead shot, a fisher of tarpons and sharks, a rover of the primeval forests. He is dressed up like a cover of *Field and Stream*, a doggyish pipe in his mouth, his tropics formidably encircled by cartridges and fish worms. But what are the facts? The facts are that Davis does all his fishing in the Fulton Market, and that the bear-skin which in his pictures he is seen holding triumphantly at arm's length actually graces his library floor and was bought at Revillon Frères. He is a God-fearing, mild-mannered, and respectable man, an admirer of Elihu Root, a Prohibitionist, a member of the Red Cross and the S. P. C. A. The only actual

hunting he ever does is to hunt for someone to agree with him that M. Irvin Cobb is a greater man than Mark Twain or Dostoievski. And when it comes to fishing, he has said all he has to say when he brings up a couple of sardellen out of the mayonnaise. -

Yet again, there are such fellows as Doty, of the *Century*; Towne, of *McClure's*; Bok, of the *Ladies' Home Journal*; Siddall, of the *American*; and Fox, of the *Police Gazette*. Doty prints Edith Wharton and Rabindranath Tagore — and reads, by choice, H. C. Witwer and Selma Lagerlöf. Fox collects Chinese jades and Sheraton chairs, and is a member of the Lake Mohonk Conference. Siddall used to be a hoochie-coochie side-show ballyhoo with Ringling's Circus. Towne, throwing off the editorial mask of moral indignation, writes tender triolets in the privacy of his chambers. Bok, viewed popularly as a muff — the wags of the National Press Club once put him down as one of the ladies entertained by them — is a rough, wild creature, a huge, knobby Hollander, with a voice like an auctioneer's. And Eastman of the *Masses*, the prophet of revolt, the savior of the oppressed — what of Eastman? Eastman, *au naturel*, gives no more damns for the oppressed than you or I. His aim in life, the last time I met him in society, was to find a chauffeur who was not a drunkard and had no flair for debauching the parlor-maids. On this theme he pumped up ten times the eloquence he has ever emitted over Unearned Increments and Wage Slaves.

### III

In a similar way are the MM. George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken misviewed. And it is because I see here an opportunity to experiment with my private theory of biography that I enter with some enjoyment the enterprise, thus thrown on me, of exhibiting the facts. To this end, I herewith present a list of the things I

happen to know about the two gentlemen in question, leaving whoever cares for the job to go through it and construct for himself a definite and symmetrical effigy. So:

### GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

He was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, February 14 and 15 (the stunning event occurred precisely at 12 midnight) 1882.

His boyhood ambition was to be an African explorer in a pith helmet, with plenty of room on the chest ribbon for medals that would be bestowed upon him by the beauteous Crown Princess of Luxembourg.

He was educated at Cornell University and the University of Bologna, in Italy.

He is a man of middle height, straight, slim, dark, with eyes like the middle of August, black hair which he brushes back *à la française*, and a rather sullen mouth.

He smokes from the moment his man turns off the matutinal showerbath until his man turns it on again at bedtime.

He rarely eats meat.

He lives in a bachelor apartment, nearly one-third of which is occupied by an ice-box containing refreshing beverages. On the walls of his apartment are the pictures of numerous toothsome creatures. He is at the present time occupied in writing a book describing his sentimental adventures among them.

He has published the following books: "Europe After 8:15," in collaboration with Mencken and Mr. Willard Huntington Wright; "Another Book on the Theater," "Bottoms Up," and "Mr. George Jean Nathan Presents."

He has written for almost every magazine in America, except *Good Housekeeping* and *The Nation*.

He dresses like the late Ward McAllister and wears daily a boutonnière of blue corn flowers.

He dislikes women over twenty-one, actors, cold weather, mayonnaise dressing, people who are always happy, hard chairs, invitations to dinner, invitations to serve on committees in however worthy a cause, railroad trips, public restaurants, rye whisky, chicken, daylight, men who do not wear waistcoats, the sight of a woman eating, the sound of a woman singing, small napkins, Maeterlinck, Verhaeren, Tagore, Dickens, Bataille, fried oysters, German soubrettes, French John Masons, American John Masons, tradesmen, poets, married women who think of leaving their husbands, professional anarchists of all kinds, ventilation, professional music lovers, men who tell how much money they have made, men who affect sudden friendships and call him Georgie, women who affect sudden friendships and then call him Mr. Nathan, writing letters, receiving letters, talking over the telephone, and wearing a hat.

In religion he is a complete agnostic, and views all clergymen with a sardonic eye. He does not believe that the soul is immortal. What will happen after death he doesn't know and has never inquired.

He is subject to neuralgia. He is a hypochondriac and likes to rehearse his symptoms. Nevertheless, a thorough physical examination has shown that he is quite sound. His Wassermann reaction is, and always has been, negative. He is eugenically fit.

He never reads the political news in the papers. He belongs to a college fraternity and several university societies.

The room in which he works is outfitted with shaded lamps and heavy hangings, and somewhat suggests a first-class bordello. He works with his coat on and shuts the windows and pulls down all the curtains. He writes with a pencil on sheets of yellow paper. He cannot use a typewriter.

He detests meeting people, even on business, and



swears every time a caller is announced at *The Smart Set* office. He never receives a woman caller save with his secretary in the room.

He wears an amethyst ring. In his waistcoat pocket he carries an elegant golden device for snapping off the heads of cigars. He has his shoes shined daily, even when it rains.

Like the late McKinley, he smokes but half of a cigar, depositing the rest in the nearest spitbox. Like Mark Twain, he enjoys the more indelicate varieties of humor. Like Beethoven, he uses neither morphine nor cocaine. Like Sitting Bull and General Joffre, he has never read the Constitution of the United States.

He bought Liberty Bonds. He can eat spinach only when it is chopped fine. He knows French, Latin, Italian, and German, but is ignorant of Greek. He plays the piano by ear.

In his taste in girls, he runs to the *demi-tasse*. I have never heard of him showing any interest in a woman more than five feet in height, or weighing more than 105 pounds.

An anarchist in criticism, he is in secret a very diligent student of Lessing, Schlegel, Hazlitt, and Brandes. His pet aversion, among critics, was the late William Winter.

He has no interest in any sport, save tennis and fencing, and never plays cards. He never accepts an invitation to dinner if he can avoid it by lying. He never goes to weddings, and knows few persons who marry.

As a critic, he has been barred from many theaters. A. L. Erlanger, in particular, is a manager who views him as a colleague of Mephisto.

He eats very little.

He drinks numerous cocktails (invariably the species known as "orange blossom," to which he has added two drops of Grenadine), a rich Burgundy, and, now and then, a bit of brandy.

He once told me that he had no use for a woman who wasn't sad at twilight.

He has two male companions — so many and no more: Mencken and John D. Williams, the theatrical producer. He is rarely seen with any other.

He was born, as the expression has it, with a gold spoon in his mouth. He has never had to work for a living.

He works daily from 10 A.M. until 5 P.M. He plays from 5:30 until 8:30. Evenings, he spends in the theater. After the theater, he has supper. He retires anywhere from 11 P.M. to 3 A.M.

He has made many trips abroad and has lived at different times in France, England, Germany, Italy, Austria, the Argentine, India, Japan and Algiers.

He fell in love at first sight in 1913 with a flower girl in the Luitpold Café in Munich, but the hussy was distant.

He would rather have Lord Dunsany in *The Smart Set* once than William Dean Howells a hundred times.

He often writes sentences so involved that he confesses he himself doesn't know what they mean.

He admires Max Beerbohm, Conrad, Dr. Llewellys Barker, Mozart, the Fifth and Ninth Symphonies and the songs in "Oh, Boy," sardines, ravioli, Havelock Ellis chocolate cake, Molnar, Hauptmann, Royalton cigars, Anatole France, *Simplicissimus*, *E. W. Howe's Monthly*, an eiderdown blanket and a hard pillow, a thick-toothed comb and stiff brush, Schnitzler, bitter almond soap, George Ade, Richard Strauss, Pilsner, Huneker, Florenz Ziegfeld, Edwin Lefèvre's story "Without End," the quartette in the Piccadilly in London, the Café Viel in Paris, the overcoat shop in the Stefansplatz in Vienna, the strawberries in the Palais de Danse in Berlin.

He believes, politically, in an autocracy of the elect, for the elect, and by the elect. . . . His father was a Democrat.

He has written one play, "The Eternal Mystery," which was produced on the Continent in 1914 and in America in 1915. He has forbidden the production of the play henceforth in any American city save Chicago, in which city anyone who chooses may perform it without payment of royalties.

In 1904 he won the Amsler gold medal for proficiency with the foils. He studied fencing under Lieutenant Philip Brigandi, of the Italian cavalry, and Captain Albert Androux, the celebrated French master of foils.

Fifteen minutes in the sun gives his complexion the shade of mahogany; twenty minutes, the shade of Booker T. Washington.

He wears the lightest weight underwear through the coldest winter.

He owns thirty-eight overcoats of all sorts and descriptions. Overcoats are a fad with him. He has them from heavy Russian fur to the flimsiest homespun. . . . He owns one with an alpine hood attachment.

He belongs to several metropolitan clubs, but never enters them.

He has never been in jail. He has been arrested but once: at the age of twenty for beating up a street-car conductor.

He always has his jackets made with two breast pockets: one for his handkerchief, the other for his reading glasses. The latter are of the horn species.

His telephone operator, at his apartment, has a list of five persons to whom he will talk — so many and no more. He refuses to answer the telephone before five o'clock in the afternoon.

His favorite places of eating in New York are the Café des Beaux Arts, the Kloster Glocke, and the Japanese Garden in the Ritz.

He can down several hundred olives at a single sitting.

He knows more about the modern foreign theater than any other American.

He is a lineal descendant of Petöfi Sándor, the national poet of Hungary, and of Thomas Bourghier, archbishop of Canterbury.

An examination of his blood, on July 1, 1917, showed: Hb., 111 %; W. B. C., 8, 175. A phthalein test showed: 1st hr., 50 %, 2d hr., 20 %; total, 70 %. Blood pressure: 129/77. Gastric analysis: Free HCl, 11.5 %; combined, 20 %. No stasis. No lactic acid.

He entered the New York Public Library for the first time on March 7, 1917, being taken there by A. Toxen Worm, of Copenhagen.

He never accepts a dinner invitation until invited three separate times, and then usually sends his regrets at the last moment.

The living Americans who most interest him are Josephus Daniels and Frank A. Munsey.

The only poet that he admires is John McClure. He seldom reads poetry. He has never read "Paradise Lost."

He never visits a house a second time in which he has encountered dogs, cats, children, automatic pianos, grace before or after meals, women authors, actors, *The New Republic*, or prints of the Mona Lisa.

He is not acquainted with a single clergyman, Congressman, general, or reformer. He has never met any of the Vice-Presidents of the United States.

He is free of adenoids.

His knee jerks are normal.

He has never been inside a church.

He has been writing dramatic criticism for thirteen successive years, and in that time has seen more than 3000 plays in America, 400 in England, and 1900 on the Continent. He has simultaneously syndicated critical articles to as many as forty-two newspapers, and has served as dramatic critic to seven metropolitan magazines.

In 1910, on a wager, he wrote sixteen magazine articles in a single month.

Among his short stories are "D. S. W.," "Nothing to Declare," "But I Love Her," "The Soul Song," "The Triple Expense," etc.

Among his most widely quoted retorts is that made by him to the newspaper interviewer who asked him if it was true that a disgruntled theatrical manager named Gest had alluded to him as a "pinhead." "That," replied Nathan, "is on the face of it absurd. 'Pinhead' is a word of two syllables."

He once observed that the reason the galleries of our theaters, as our theatrical managers lament, are no longer filled with newsboys is that all the newsboys are now theatrical managers.

He wrote the introduction to Eleanor Gates' play, "The Poor Little Rich Girl."

He is the first American critic to have written of the dramatists Molnar, Brighouse, and Bracco.

His mother's family were the pioneer settlers of Fort Wayne, Indiana. His father's family were figures in the continental world of letters. His father spoke eleven languages, including the Chinese.

He frequently spends an entire afternoon polishing up a sentence in one of his compositions. And he often stops writing for a couple of days, or as long as it takes him, to hit upon an appropriate adjective or phrase.

He never writes love letters, and seldom reads them.

He cannot operate a motor car, or cook anything, or wind a dynamo, or fix a clock, or guess the answer to a riddle, or milk a cow.

He regards camping out as the most terrible diversion ever invented by man.

He knows nothing of country life, and cannot tell a wheat field from a potato patch. He regards all deciduous trees as oaks, and all evergreens as cedars.

He has yet to drink his first glass of Hires' Root Beer.

He regards Al Woods as the most competent commercial manager in the American theater.

His library contains every known book on the drama published in the English, French, German, and Italian languages.

He owns many of the original Dunsany manuscripts.

Accused by certain of his critics of a flippant attitude toward the drama, he in reality takes the drama very seriously. The theater, on the other hand, he regards four out of five times as a joke.

He concurs in the Walpole philosophy that life is a tragedy to him who feels and a comedy to him who thinks.

He is a good listener. His invariable practice with talkers is to let the latter talk themselves out and then, after a moment's studious silence, to nod his head and say yes. He never argues, never disagrees, no matter how bizarre the conversationalist's pronunciamientos.

The Paris journal, *Le Temps*, frequently translates his critical articles and quotes from them copiously.

He owns an autographed photograph of the Russian mystic, Rasputin, presented to him by the latter six years ago.

He dislikes all forms of publicity. He has an aversion to self-advertisement that amounts almost to a mania. He believes, with Mencken, that whom the gods would destroy, they first make popular.

He takes a companion with him to the theater only on rare occasions. He uses the extra seat sent him by the managers as a depository for his hat and overcoat.

He always has thirty or forty lead pencils beside him when he writes. The moment one becomes a trifle dull he picks up another. He cannot sharpen the pencils well enough to suit himself and has the job done by his secretary.

He hasn't the slightest intention of ever getting married.

He believes that the motor trip from Watkins Glen to Elmira, in New York State, is the most beautiful in America.

Among the Presidents of the United States he admires most — and by long odds — the late Grover Cleveland.

He believes the dirtiest spot in the world to be the Azores.

He believes Shaw's "Cæsar and Cleopatra" to be the best modern British play, Brioux's "Les Hannetons" the best modern French play, and Dunsany's "Gods of the Mountain" the best modern Irish play.

He gets squiffed about once in six weeks, usually in company with John Williams. He has a headache the next day.

He carries a tube of menthol in his pocket and sniffs at it forty times a day.

He has been writing his monthly article for *The Smart Set* since 1909. He and Mencken became editors of the magazine in August, 1914.

He began his career as a man of letters by reporting for the New York *Herald*. He reads the *Times* and *Globe* daily.

Among his critical contemporaries in New York he has the highest respect for Louis Sherwin. Of American dramatists he most admires Avery Hopwood. Of American dramatic critics his vote is probably for Henry T. Parker, of the Boston *Transcript*.

In his own opinion, the best thing he has ever written is "The Eternal Mystery."

He has never been to Washington, nor to California, nor to Boston.

He has never made a speech, nor delivered a lecture, nor sat on a committee. He has never subscribed to a charity fund.

He wears a No. 14½ collar and No. 7¼ hat. His favorite soup is *Crème de Sante*.

The only author he ever invites to his office is Harry Kemp. He detests Kemp's poetry.

The temperature of his daily bath is 67 degrees.

A practitioner of preciousness in style, he nevertheless dictates business and social letters in a "would say" manner, and has his secretary sign them.

In 1900 he fought a duel with pistols outside of Florence, Italy, and was wounded in the left shoulder. He is still a trifle lame from the wound.

Returning to America in 1912 on the *Philadelphia*, during a rough passage he was the only passenger on the ship to appear in the dining saloon for four successive days. With three of the stewards, he passed the time by improvising a bowling alley in the saloon, utilizing mutton chops for the pins and oranges for the balls. The latter were automatically returned to the bowlers by the ship's periodical pitch backward.

He has had the same barber for fourteen years. Curiously enough, the barber's name is George J. Nath.

His valet's name is Osuka F. Takami. The latter has a penchant for polishing Nathan's patent leather boots with the sofa pillows.

He has seen only one vaudeville show in the last eight years.

He believes that Herma Prach is the prettiest girl on the Viennese stage and Gladys Gaynor the prettiest on the London stage. He has never seen a pretty girl on either the Berlin or Paris stage.

His headquarters in London is the Savoy; in Berlin, the Adlon; in Vienna, the Grand; in Paris, the Astra.

He has never eaten a pickled eel, calf's brains, chicken livers, or tongue.

He has never been in a Childs' restaurant or in Rector's.

He is of a nervous temperament and the slightest sound during the night wakes him up.

He looks seven years younger than he is.



He has been shot at three times in America, but never hit.

He likes chop suey, spaghetti, French pastry, horse-radish sauce, Welsh rarebits, oysters à la *Dumas*, raw tomatoes, stuffed baked potatoes, green peppers, broiled lobster, halibut, mushrooms cooked with caraway seeds, and chipped beef.

His favorite American city is Philadelphia. His favorite French, Barbizon. His favorite German, Munich. His favorite English, Leeds.

He covered murder trials in various parts of the country for the New York *Herald* during the years of his preparation for dramatic criticism.

He wears tan pongee silk shirts in summer.

The New Yorkers he admires most are W. R. Hearst, Arthur Hopkins, and M. Alevy, the eminent *maître d'hôtel* of the Café des Beaux Arts.

He is the only American dramatic critic who has never succumbed to the Augustus Thomas, Granville Barker or Belasco rumble-bumble.

He is entirely ignorant of mathematics, geology, botany, and physics. Like Mencken, however, he is a good speller, and is privy to the intricacies of punctuation.

The name of the girl who manicures his nails is Miss Priscilla Brown. She is an orphan.

The claret he commonly serves to his guests costs eighty-five cents a gallon, in quarts. He buys the labels separately.

His favorite hospitals are the Johns Hopkins, in Baltimore, and Galen Hall, in Atlantic City. Whenever he is ill he goes to one or the other.

Since 1901 he has loved seventeen different girls, and still remembers the names of all of them, and their preferences in literature, food, and wines. Of the seventeen, fourteen are happily married, one has been married and divorced, and the rest have gone West.

He owns three watches, seventeen scarf-pins, and nineteen pairs of shoes.

His skull is sub-brachycephalic, with a cephalic index of 83.1. His cranial capacity, by the system of Deniker, is 1756 cc. His nose is mesorhinian, and his nasal index is 46.2. The ratio between the length of his radius and that of his humerus is as 73 is to 100.

By the Binet-Simon test his general intelligence is that of a man of 117 years.

His voice is a baritone, with a range of one octave and two tones.

He never answers questions put to him in letters.

A friend presented him several years ago with a set of O. Henry, which, try as he will, he can't get rid of.

He would rather eat a salt-sprinkled raw tomato still hot from the sun than a dinner from the hand of a French chef.

He has everything he wears made to his order, save his belts and his socks. He never buys even a hat that is ready-made.

He has written under the pseudonyms of George Narét, Rupert Cross, and William Drayham.

He has been denounced in the New York newspapers, during his career as dramatic critic, by three playwrights, five theatrical managers, eight actresses, twenty-two actors, and almost everyone connected with vaudeville.

He likes garlic, but refrains from eating it.

He has read Max Beerbohm's "Happy Hypocrite" thirteen times.

Like Mencken, he is subject to periodic attacks of melancholia.

He has visited every American resort north of Old Point Comfort — and thinks them all pretty bad.

He believes the Ritz, in Philadelphia, to be the best hotel in America.

He believes the Hudson Theater, in New York, to be the most comfortable theater in America.

Several years ago, seeking isolation in which to finish a piece of work, he decided to shut his eyes, run his finger down a New York Central time-table, and go to the place opposite the name of which his finger would come to a halt. His finger stopped opposite an exotic something named New Paltz. . . . The first person he saw when he got off at the New Paltz station was the man he had roomed with in his junior year at college.

He has said that "cleverness" consists merely in saying the wrong thing at the right time.

He owns three suits of evening clothes.

He wears pongee pajamas.

His one-act play, "The Eternal Mystery," which was suppressed in New York and Detroit, created more discussion than any one-act play produced in America in the last dozen years.

He is kind to dogs, babies, and negroes. He has never given a street beggar a cent.

Among his closest friends in Europe are Ballington Booth, Jack Johnson, and M. Philippe Cartier, in charge of the malt department on the Orient Express.

His most ingenious piece of dramatic criticism was his criticism of the writings of Augustus Thomas, in which he proved that Thomas' plays would be better if they were played backward.

His hair grows so quickly that he has to get a hair-cut every ten days.

His father's first name was Charles; his middle name, Narét.

He likes hot weather, the hotter the better.

He believes the island of Bermuda to be the most beautiful spot on earth. He would like to live there — if he couldn't live in Munich.

He once wrote an article on The Department of the Interior for *Munsey's Magazine*. He gave the proceeds;

by way of atonement, to the First Baptist Church of Asbury Park.

He knew Evelyn Nesbit when she was a baby.

He believes that twelve per cent of all reformers and uplifters are asses, and that the rest are thieves.

He wears low, Byronic collars and rather gaudy neckties.

In philosophy he is a skeptical idealist, believing that the truth is an illusion and that man is a botch. He has read the works of Kant, Fichte, and Locke, but can't remember what was in them. He regards Schopenhauer, on the woman question, as a sentimentalist whistling in the dark.

His knowledge of economics is extensive, and he once wrote a pamphlet against David Ricardo. It has been translated into French, German, and Bohemian.

He has never written any poetry in English, but published a slim volume of Petrarchan sonnets in Italian during his student days in Bologna. The only copy of this book known to exist is in the library of Balliol College, Oxford. The author's own copy was lost in the burning of the Hôtel de France at Lausanne, in the winter of 1903.

He is an excellent Latinist and has translated Albius Tibullus.

His favorite opera is Gluck's "Iphigénie in Tauris." He once traveled from Nice to Dresden to hear it. His chief abomination in the opera house is "The Jewels of the Madonna."

While on the staff of the New York *Herald*, James Gordon Bennett offered him the post of London correspondent. The emolument proposed, however, made Nathan laugh.

He owns three top hats, fourteen walking sticks, and two Russian wolf-hounds.

He writes with a Mikado No. 1 lead-pencil.

He is on good terms with but two members of his family.

He reads, on the average, one hundred and fifty foreign plays every year.

He has read every book on the drama published in America, England, France, and Germany since 1899.

He uses Calox tooth powder, Colgate's shaving soap, a double strength witch hazel, a Gillette razor, and Kitchell's Horse Liniment. He has never taken quinine, Peruna, Piso's Cough Syrup, Sanatogen, asperin, morphine, opium, or castor oil — but he has taken everything else.

He believes Mencken eats too much.

He has been inoculated against typhoid.

He once, as a boy, ran a railroad locomotive from Cleveland, Ohio, to Chagrin Falls, Ohio, killing only two cows.

He gets a cinder in his eye on an average of twice a day.

He can drink anything but sweet cordials.

With his meals, he uses Cross and Blackwell's chow-chow.

In his undergraduate days he was an editor of all the Cornell University papers.

He wrote articles on the theater for the old *Harper's Weekly* for four years.

He knows three jockeys, eight bartenders, one murderer, two sea captains, three policemen, one letter carrier, and one politician.

He is a warm friend of Detective William J. Burns.

He likes buttermilk.

Christmas costs him, on the average, about a thousand dollars.

For the last two years he has received weekly anonymous letters from some woman in Bridgeport, Connecticut, who signs herself with the initials "L. G."

He is writing the introduction to Arthur Hopkins' new book on the drama.

He has not ridden a horse since May 22, 1908.

In October, 1912, he and his broker were wrecked off Barnegat in the latter's yacht, *Margo I*, and were rescued via a breeches buoy by the Barnegat life-saving crew.

He never reads popular novels.

Mr. Winthrop Ames has invited him to write a satirical review for his Little Theater in New York and Nathan is planning to do the thing during 1918.

He eats two raw eggs a day to put on weight.

When the victim of a bad cold and unable to smoke, he chews soft licorice candy while writing.

He believes that George Bickel is the funniest comedian on the American stage, that Arnold Daly is the best actor, that Margaret Illington is the best actress.

He has never written a thing that, upon rereading after its appearance in print, didn't seem to him to be chock full of flaws.

He is lucky at games of chance, though he seldom plays. In 1912 he won \$2,000 in the Havana lottery.

He owns six belts, one of them presented to him by Gabriele D'Annunzio and made of wolf hide.

He is in favor of universal military service, imperialism, and birth-control, but is opposed to woman suffrage, the direct primary, and prohibition.

His usual pulse is 71 a minute. After drinking it rises to 85.

He keeps no books of account, and does not know his exact income. As a means of defense against sudden calamity he keeps \$3000 in gold in a safe deposit vault.

His favorite name for girls is Helen.

If he could rechristen himself, he would choose the given name of John.

He pronounces his middle name, not in the French manner, but to rhyme with bean.

He is a third cousin of Signor Enrico Nathan, the late Socialist mayor of Rome. His uncle, Dr. Émile Nathan van der Linde, *privat docent* in anthropology at Leyden, was killed by savages in Borneo in 1889, while a member of the Oesterling exploring expedition.

He has never visited the battlefield at Gettysburg.

### H. L. MENCKEN

He was born at Baltimore on Sunday, September 12, 1880, and was baptized in the Church of England.

He was educated at the Baltimore Polytechnic, and is theoretically competent to run a steam engine or a dynamo, but actually is quite incapable of doing either.

Down to the age of fifteen it was his ambition to be a chemist, and to this day he is full of fantastic chemical information and fond of unloading it. At the age of fourteen he invented a means of toning photographic silver prints with platinum.

The family business was tobacco, and he was drafted for it on leaving school. He became a journeyman cigar-maker, and can make excellent cigars to this day. But when chemistry and business died out, literature set in, and he took to journalism.

At the age of twenty-three he was city editor and at twenty-five managing editor of the Baltimore *Herald*, now defunct — the youngest managing editor of a big city daily in the United States.

He printed a book of poems at twenty-two — now a rare *biblot*. He was “discovered,” as the saying is, by Ellery Sedgwick, now editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, but then running *Leslie's Monthly*. He and Sedgwick have remained on friendly terms to this day, but he sometimes writes for the *Atlantic*.

In 1900, having read Lafcadio Hearn's “Two Years in the French West Indies,” he shipped on a banana boat

for the Spanish Main, and has returned to the West Indies three times since.

He is five feet, eight and a half inches in height, and weighs about 185 pounds. In 1915 he bulged up to 197 pounds. Then he took the Vance Thompson cure and reduced to 175, rebounding later.

The things he dislikes most are Methodists, college professors, newspaper editorials (of which, in his time, he has written more than 10,000), Broadway restaurants, reformers, actors, children, magazine fiction, dining out, the New Freedom, prohibition, sex hygiene, *The Nation*, soft drinks, women under thirty, the nonconformist conscience, Socialism, good business men, the moral theory of the world, and the sort of patriotism that makes a noise.

Among the men he admires are Joseph Conrad, W. R. Hearst, E. W. Howe, Richard Strauss, Anatole France, and Erich Ludendorff — this last because he is a great general and has never uttered a single word of patriotic or pietistic cant. He likes Dreiser, but does not admire him.

His taste in female beauty runs to a slim hussy, not too young, with dark eyes and a relish for wit. He abhors sentimentality in women, holding that it is a masculine weakness, and unbecoming the fair. He seldom falls in love, and then only momentarily.

He wears buttoned shoes because he cannot tie shoe laces. Neither can he tie a dress tie; if there is no one to tie it for him he has to miss the party. In general, he is almost wholly devoid of manual dexterity, though he can play the piano well enough to entertain himself, and is a good sight reader.

The only art that ever stirs him is music. He views literature objectively, almost anatomically. He is anaesthetic to painting. His favorite composers are Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, Brahms, and Richard Strauss.



He detests Tschaikowsky and Rossini, and likes Wagner better out of the opera house than in it. In his youth he wrote waltzes. He abominates song and piano recitals and oratorios. He has a pretty extensive knowledge of musical technique, and knows a sound sonata from a bad one. When he improvises it is usually in F major. He has a poor ear and cannot tune a fiddle.

He drinks all the known alcoholic beverages, but prefers Pilsner to any other; a few seidels make him very talkative. In the absence of Pilsner, he drinks Michelob. He seldom drinks at meals and often goes three or four days without a drink. In wine, he likes whatever is red and cheap. He detests champagne, Scotch and rye whisky, and gin, though he drinks them all to be polite. He has a good head, and is not soused more than once a year, usually at Christmas.

He has good eyes and a gentle mouth, but his nose is upset, his ears stick out too much, and he is shapeless and stoop-shouldered. One could not imagine him in the moving pictures. He has strong and white, but irregular teeth.

He wears a No. 7½ hat. He is bow-legged. He is a fast walker. He used to snore when asleep, but had his nasal septum straightened by surgery, and does so no longer.

He takes no interest whatever in any sport. He played baseball as a boy, but hasn't seen a game for ten years, and never looks at the baseball news in the papers. He cannot play tennis or golf, and has never tried. He knows nothing of cards. He never bets on elections or horse-races. He never takes any exercise save walking.

He rejects the whole of Christianity, including especially its ethics, and does not believe that the soul is immortal. His moral code is from the Chinese and has but one item: keep your engagements. He pays all bills immediately, never steals what he can buy, and is never

late for an appointment. He has missed but one train in his life.

He believes in war so long as it is not for a moral cause. He advocates universal military training on the ground that it causes wars.

His table manners are based upon provincial French principles, with modifications suggested by the Cossacks of the Don.

When at home he arises at eight sharp every morning, and is at his desk at nine.

He likes to go motoring at night, and often sets out alone at midnight.

He takes a half hour's nap every afternoon. He can sleep anywhere and at almost any time.

He has eleven uncles and aunts and eighteen cousins, and has never quarreled with any of them.

He has been inoculated against typhoid and hay fevers.

He is a prompt correspondent, and answers every letter the day it is received.

He keeps his watch on an old-fashioned clothes-press in his workroom, and winds it every time he looks at it.

He detests windy days. As between heat and cold, he prefers heat.

He never preserves love letters, and never writes them.

His tonsils have been cut out. His Wassermann reaction is and always has been negative. He has a low blood pressure. His heart and kidneys are normal.

His favorite hotel is the Bayrischer Hof at Munich. After that he ranks them in the following order: the Adlon, Berlin; the Palace, Madrid; the Palast, Copenhagen; the Statler, Buffalo; the Edouard VII, Paris.

He says the best place to eat in the whole world is at the basement lunch counter of the Rennert Hotel, Baltimore. The best things to order there are oyster potpie, boiled turkey with oyster sauce, Virginia ham and spinach, and boiled tongue.

He owns ten suits of clothes, and wears them seriatim. All of them are of summer weight. He never wears heavy clothes.

He never wears patent leather shoes, even with dress clothes. He wears horn spectacles for reading, but never otherwise.

Between 1899 and 1906 he wrote and published thirty-five short stories. Since 1906 he has written none.

For five years he contributed a daily article to the Baltimore *Evening Sun*. His total writings for newspapers run to nearly 10,000,000 words. He has reported three national conventions and nine executions.

His one-act play, "The Artist," has been translated into German, Dano-Norwegian, Italian, and Russian.

He has twice voted for Roosevelt, not by conviction, but because he believes Roosevelt gives a better show than any other performer in the ring. In politics he is a strict federalist.

He advocates woman suffrage on the ground that, if women voted, democracy would be reduced to an absurdity the sooner.

He is very polite to women, particularly if he dislikes them, which is usually.

He owns the original manuscript of "Sister Carrie," presented to him by Dreiser.

He is a nephew of the late Right Rev. Frederick Bainville Mencken, bishop of Akkad in *partibus infidelium*. This uncle was disinherited by his grandfather as a result of a family dispute over transubstantiation.

His pet literary abominations are "alright" (as one word) and the use of "near" as an adjective. He will never speak of or to an author who uses either.

His favorite eating places in New York are Rogers', the Kloster Glocke, the Lafayette, and the Café del Pezzo.

The cities he likes best are Munich, Chicago, Baltimore;

and London. He dislikes Paris, Rome, Berlin, and New York — the last-named so much that, whenever he has any work to do, he goes to Baltimore to do it.

He was an intimate friend of the late Paul Armstrong for many years and never quarreled with him.

In his own opinion, the best thing he has ever written is "Death: a Discussion" in his "Book of Burlesques."

He wears B. V. D.'s all the year round, and actually takes a cold bath every day.

He never has his nails manicured, but trims them with a jackknife.

Every Saturday night he spends the time between 8 and 10 playing music, and the time between 10 and 12 drinking Michelob. He plays second piano.

He has received three proposals of marriage, but has never succumbed. He has never seduced a working girl. He has no issue.

He works in his shirt-sleeves and sleeps in striped pajamas.

He wears Manhattan garters, No. 15½ Belmont collars, and very long-tailed overcoats. His plug hat, which he wears but two or three times a year, has a flat brim, like that of a French comedian.

He is smooth-faced and shaves every morning with a Gillette safety razor. Once, while in Paris, he grew a yellow moustache and goatee. They lasted, however, but two weeks.

He has lived in one house in Baltimore for 34 years. In it he has 3000 books.

He owns the largest collection of Ibseniana in the world, including autographs, first editions, and other rarities. Part of it is in Baltimore, part in Copenhagen, part in Munich, and part in Geneva.

He reads German and Norwegian fluently, French, Spanish, Italian, and Latin less fluently, and makes shift to sweat through the following: Russian, Greek, Dutch,

Rumanian, Serbian, Czech, Sanskrit, Assyrian, Hungarian, and Swedish.

His favorite American poet is Lizette Woodworth Reese. He and she have lived in the same city for years, but they have never met.

His total receipts in royalties on his books, in fifteen years, have been \$172.50.

His personal funds are invested in bonds of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Midvale Steel Company, and the Danish, Chilean, and Swiss governments.

During his newspaper career he was American correspondent of the *Hongkong Press*, the *Kobe Chronicle*, and the *Colombo (Ceylon) Observer*.

One of his fads is theology. He understands its technical terminology, and is sometimes consulted on difficult points by both Catholic and Protestant clergy.

Down to July 7, 1913, he employed suspenders to hold up his trousers. Being then convinced by Nathan that such appliances had a socialistic smack, he abandoned them for a belt.

He reads an average of ten books a week, in addition to those he goes through for reviewing purposes. The subjects he affects are theology, biology, economics, and modern history.

He has never read George Eliot, or Jane Austen, or Bulwer-Lytton. He has never been able to read Dostoevski, or Turgenev, or Balzac. His favorite writers, as a youth, were Thackeray, Huxley, and Kipling. He seldom reads newspapers. The only magazines he ever looks at are the *Smart Set*, *Ed Howe's Monthly*, the *Country Gentleman*, the *Masses*, the *Seven Arts*, and the *Ladies' Home Journal*.

He has a wide acquaintance among medical men and knows a good deal about modern medical problems. His advice is often sought by persons seeking treatment; he gives it copiously.

He knows mathematics up to plane geometry and trigonometry. He knows philosophy, chemistry, and history, but is ignorant of physics and grammar. He can draw with some skill, and was once a good mechanical draftsman. He is an excellent speller and knows how to punctuate.

In philosophy he is a strict mechanist of the Loeb-Haeckel school. In psychology he leans toward Adler. He questions pragmatism, but admits its workableness. He is an advocate of absolute free speech in all things — and exhibits the utmost intolerance in combatting those who oppose it.

He believes and argues that sex is a vastly less potent influence in life than the Puritans and psychanalysts maintain. He advocates the establishment of lay monasteries for men who care for neither God nor women.

When he is at home he lunches at noon and dines at six. He never eats between meals. He never takes a drink before dinner save when on holiday.

He most often begins his letters to men with the salutation "My dear Mon Chair." To women, "My dear Mon Chairy."

A March ago, he attempted to give up smoking and sought to alleviate his longing for the weed by sucking slippery elm. He was again pulling at a stogie the following month.

He has probably done more for talented young writers who have tried in vain to get a hearing with publishers than any other American critic. Of all those whom he has helped to obtain an hospitable ear, only one has ever so much as thanked him.

He forgives anything in a friend — theft, perjury, or stupidity — anything save hypocrisy. But he has no use for loyalty in others. "Loyalty," he says, "is the virtue of a dog."

He pokes fun at modern musical comedy, particularly the music thereof. Yet he has never heard "Sari" or "The Purple Road," or the best of the last dozen scores of Victor Herbert.

He believes, with Nathan, that the three best stories printed in *The Smart Set* under their joint editorial direction have been "The Exiles' Club," by Dunsany; "Ashes to Ashes," by James Gardner Sanderson; and "The End of Ilsa Mentieth," by Lilith Benda. He believes, like Nathan, that the most charming sentimental story printed in *The Smart Set* has been Lee Pape's "Little Girl." He believes, with Nathan, that the best epigram has been that sent in by an anonymous contributor: "When love dies there is no funeral. The corpse remains in the house."

He met Nathan for the first time in the chateau of the Comtesse Hélène de Firelle in the valley of the Loire, on August 10, 1906. Three days later they left together for a trip to Munich, to drink the waters.

One of his best pieces of humor is a pun on "*non compos mentis*." I cannot print it.

A healthy man, he yet complains hourly of imaginary ailments.

He has never seen Coney Island.

When in his cups, he imagines himself a proficient bass singer.

In the last three years he has been to the theater but once. On this occasion he accompanied Nathan to a piece called "Common Clay." He remained twenty minutes.

He uses handkerchiefs two feet wide.

He always fights with Nathan for the bar or dinner check. His records of victories is eight per cent.

Like Nathan, he dislikes to talk about business affairs or to listen to anyone talk about business affairs. Both he and Nathan leave their finances entirely in the hands of their competent partner, E. F. Warner.

He and Nathan plan some day to collaborate on a satirical farce with scenes laid in a Turkish harem.

In conversation he is given to an immoderate employment of the word "bemuse."

He believes the following to be his best epigram: "An anti-vivisectionist is one who gags at a guinea pig and swallows a baby." To the contrary, I believe his best to be: "The charm of a man is measured by the charm of the women who think that he is a scoundrel."

He wrote dramatic criticisms in Baltimore for four years. At the end of that period, unable longer to bear the idiocies of the local theaters, he inserted a \$200 half-page advertisement in each of the Baltimore newspapers to the effect that he would cause the arrest of the next manager who sent him tickets.

He loves cocoanut pie.

He smokes cigarettes only on rare occasions. He is not used to them and, on such occasions, holds the cigarette gingerly, as if it were going to bite him.

Present at a mixed conversation, he frequently dozes off to sleep.

When in New York, every night before retiring he eats a dozen large clams.

He never drinks beer save in seidels.

He has been to the Horse Show but once. On this occasion he remained three minutes.

He does not dance.

In Paris, in 1913, he hailed Nathan on the latter's way to Southampton with this wireless: "Get off Cherbourg and come direct Paris. Have discovered place where they have good beer."

He is unable to sit at table upon finishing dinner. With the arrival of the finger-bowl he is off for a walk.

He is, at bottom, a sentimentalist. True, he has no use for such things as babies, love stories (however good), or the Champs Élysées in the springtime (once while



walking up the boulevard with Nathan he deplored the absence on it of a first-class drugstore), yet he succumbs moistly to Julia Sanderson singing, "They Wouldn't Believe Me," to a cemetery in the early green of May, to the lachrymose waltz from "Eva," which he plays upon the piano in a melancholious *pianissimo*, and to any poem about a dog (however bad).

His trousers are never creased. His clothes are always of a navy blue shade. He never wears a waistcoat. He buys the best cravats that can be obtained for fifty cents.

He loves liqueurs, preferably *crème de cacao*. They always make him feel badly the next morning.

He has written the following books: "A Book of Prefaces," "A Little Book in C Major," "A Book of Burlesques," "The Battle of the Wilhelmstrasse," "The Artist," "The Gist of Nietzsche," "The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche," "Europe after 8:15" (in collaboration with Nathan and Wright), "Men *vs.* the Man" (in collaboration with R. R. La Monte), and "George Bernard Shaw: His Plays." The latter was the first book on Shaw ever published.

He eats and enjoys all varieties of human food. There is no dish that he doesn't eat. He has eaten snails, frogs, eels, octopus, catfish, goat meat, and Norwegian cheese. He thinks that the best roasts are the English, the best table wines the Spanish, the best pastry the Danish, the best soups the German, and the best cooking the French.

He has visited the following countries: England, Holland, Norway, Denmark, Italy, Germany, Austria, Russia, Spain, France, Switzerland, and Cuba. He has never been in Canada or Mexico, and has never been further West than St. Louis.

He has been under rifle and shell fire in this war, on the eastern front, and was glad to get under cover. He

has been in France, Germany, and Russia during the war. He was nowhere mistaken for a spy, and was always treated courteously. He says that 99 per cent of the authors of war books are liars.

His family is well-to-do, and he has never been dead broke.

He has never seen a moving picture show.

He is opposed to vice crusades, holding that the average prostitute is decenter than the average reformer. He ascribes the crusading spirit, following Freud, to a suppressed and pathological sexuality.

He wears (and owns) no jewelry whatever, not even a scarfpin, but he sports a formidable Swiss watch, with a split second hand and a bell that strikes the quarter hours. He never wears gloves save in intensely cold weather.

He owns and drives a 1916 Studebaker car, and never has it washed.

Once, on receiving an amorous *billet doux* from a fair admirer, he sent it back to the writer with a *Smart Set* rejection slip.

He frequently carries on a perfectly innocent conversation with Nathan in a low stage whisper, thus lending to his most trivial remarks a secret and sinister import.

He introduced the new widespread use of "jitney" as an adjective. He also coined the words "smuthound" and "snouter," both designating a "malignant moralist" — another of his invention.

While playing the piano, he keeps the loud pedal glued to the floor from *couvert* to *coda*.

He and Nathan, in all the years of their friendship, have quarreled but once. This was in the late summer of 1916, when Mencken was suffering from a violent attack of hay fever and insisted upon going to bed one night at eleven o'clock, thus leaving the disgusted Nathan

to kill time as best he could until midnight, at that period his hour for retiring.

He never wears rubbers, carries an umbrella, or wears a mackintosh. He likes to walk in the rain and get wet.

He alludes to all actors as "cabots." For the plural of "genius" he uses "genii."

He travels with a suitcase large enough to transport a circus.

At the age of twenty-nine he was invited to join the Elks. . . . The judge, a friend of his, reduced the charge from "assault with intent to kill" to "assault and battery."

He has never had typhoid fever, smallpox, cholera, scarlet fever, arthritis, appendicitis, or delirium tremens. He has never had a headache. He can digest anything.

He has been involved, in his time, in eight lawsuits, and has won them all, chiefly by perjury.

His first name is Henry; his middle name, Louis. He never spells them out, signing himself always simply H. L.

He drinks a brand of cheap claret which he lays in in shipments of ten cases.

He has presented the steward of the Florestan Club, of Baltimore, with a bronze medal for reviving Maryland hoe cake.

A life-long opponent of Puritanism in all its forms, he is on good personal terms with many Puritan reformers, and always reads the tracts they send to him.

He has been arrested four times, once in Paris, once in Copenhagen, and twice in America. He was acquitted each time, though guilty.

He complains ceaselessly over what it costs him to live. Yet he is a liberal fellow and keeps Nathan supplied with cigars. The cigars, however, are not to Nathan's taste.

He is an omnivorous borrower of matches.

He washes his hands twenty-four times a day.

He writes directly upon the typewriter, never long-hand. He signs all his letters with the episcopal "Yours in Xt."

For the last four years he and Nathan have been planning a motor trip through Virginia. They will never make it, both agree emphatically.

His favorite dish is anything à la *Créole*.

He once brought from abroad, as a gift to his negro cook, three dozen strings of Venetian beads. She is a strict Baptist and declined to wear them.

His favorite novel is "Huckleberry Finn"; his favorite name for a woman, Maggie.

He often goes without breakfast, and never eats more than an apple and a slice of dry bread.

He and Nathan have their secretaries in *The Smart Set* offices keep a list of forty-two bad writers. Opposite the name of each of the forty-two is the fine one must pay the other if the name is uttered by either.

He slicks his hair down like the actor who plays the heroic lieutenant in the military dramas.

He likes to ride down Fifth Avenue in a victoria.

He owns a plaid shirt. He wears it.

He has worn the same straw hat for five years. He cleans it every spring with a tooth-brush dipped in bicarbonate of soda and Pebecco tooth paste. Each spring he buys a new tooth-brush.

He writes in a bare room. There is no carpet or rug on the floor. The only pictures on the wall are portraits of his great-great-grandfather, Ibsen, Conrad, Marcella Allonby, Mark Twain, and Johannes Brahms.

He sleeps on a sleeping porch adjoining his office. He uses, as a blanket, a Persian shawl presented to him by the late Lafcadio Hearn.

He has read 9872 bad novels during his active life as a literary critic.

He is an artist of no mean ability. His portrait of Nathan, reproduced in the Chicago *Daily News* in May, 1917, attracted wide attention and, among other things, brought him requests for sittings from Hamlin Garland, William Lyon Phelps, and Robert B. Mantell.

He clips the ends off his cigars with his side teeth.

He has written under the pseudonyms of William R. Fink, William Drayham, John F. Brownell, Harriet Morgan, W. L. D. Bell, Gladys Jefferson, and Baroness Julie Desplaines.

He sees nothing beautiful about the Hudson from Riverside Drive, but believes St. Thomas's to be one of the most beautiful churches in the world.

He collects odd pieces of furniture, Japanese wood carvings, and bad plaster of paris casts.

He knows two actors, George Fawcett and Frank Craven.

He was taught how to swim by John Adams Thayer.

He is the author of a farce that has played on Broadway for one hundred nights. To this authorship, no one save Nathan, James Huneker, A. H. Woods, and myself have been privy.

His high-water marks in the matter of malt bibbing are as follows: Pschorrbräu, Munich, 8 *masses* in two hours and seven minutes; Appenrodt's, Paris, 9 *seidels* in one hour and a quarter; Lüchow's, New York, 13 *seidels* and one glass in one hour, twenty-one minutes and twelve seconds. Timers: Pschorrbräu, Arthur Abbott, H. B. M. vice-consul; Appenrodt's, Pierre Disdebau, of Marseilles, France; Lüchow's, Theodore Dreiser, of Warsaw, Indiana, U. S. A.

He was a regular reader of the *Boston Transcript*, the *New York Times*, and the *Youth's Companion*, up to the age of ten.

He believes W. L. George to be the best of the younger English novelists.

His signature runs up hill.

He has been cured of hay-fever and is at present writing a pamphlet extolling the discoverers of the cure.

He admires the kind of Munich "art" that is sold in the Fifth Avenue shops at \$4.35 the picture.

He likes to look in shop windows. He has never ridden in a Ferris Wheel.

He laments the fact that he gets no exercise and contemplates fixing up a carpenter shop in the basement of his house in Baltimore, so that he may saw and chop his arms back into muscular shape.

He numbers the paragraphs of his letters and never writes more than six paragraphs.

The English critics hailed his Nietzsche book as the best thing of its sort that had come out of America.

He has never read Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" or "Pericles, Prince of Tyre."

He believes that all fat women are sentimental and says that the publisher who will edit a magazine for this clientèle will make a fortune. Inasmuch as magazine fiction heroines are at present always slim, elf-like creatures, he contends that the sentimental fat girl never gets a fair chance to enjoy herself, and that, accordingly, a magazine with no heroine weighing less than one hundred and ninety pounds would in one year put Cyrus K. Curtis in the pauper class.

Like Nathan, he believes that the theory that it is difficult to make money is poppycock. If one is willing to give the public what it wants, anyone — argue these two — can get rich very quickly. To prove their contention, they outlined plans for several cheap magazines three years ago, which, upon being put into circulation, proved immediate and overwhelming successes. Mencken and Nathan, at the end of six months, sold their joint interest for \$100,000. They argue that the thing is as simple as rolling off a log, and that any person who

is interested in this sort of thing may become a Street-and-Smith or Munsey overnight.

At the age of nineteen, he invented a slot machine for the vending of patent medicines on excursion boats.

He has read "Huckleberry Finn" twenty-seven times. He reads the book once a year, regularly.

He has never seen Mrs. Castle, Mary Garden, Ann Pennington, Maurice and Walton, Mary Pickford, or Secretary Lansing.

He has shaken hands with Billy Sunday.

Wherever he goes he carries a Corona typewriter. He paid \$50 cash for it, but nevertheless he has given the manufacturers an eloquent testimonial. He writes on cheap newspaper copy-paper.

He is fond of candy.

He is an ardent defender of organized charity, arguing that it helps progress by making charity difficult and obnoxious.

He is often mistaken for a misogynist. He is actually a strict monogamist. He believes that all men are naturally monogamists, and that polygamy is due to vanity.

He began to edit the plays of Ibsen in 1910, but abandoned the enterprise after he had issued "A Doll's House" and "Little Eyolf."

He is a bitter opponent of Christian Science, and has written all sorts of things, from epigrams to long articles, against it.

The La Mencken cigar, once popular throughout the South, was not named after him, but after his father.

He is a good sailor, and has been seasick but once — on a 1000-ton British tramp in a West Indian hurricane.

In blood he is chiefly Saxon, Danish, Bavarian, and Irish — no Anglo-Saxon, no Prussian, no Latin. The portraits of his Saxon forefathers show strong Slavic traces. He is the present head of the family. A Mencken,

in the seventeenth century, founded the first scientific review in Europe. Another was privy councilor to Frederick the Great. Another was rector of the University of Leipzig. Yet another was chief justice of the supreme court there. A Mlle. Mencken was the mother of Bismarck.

The Menckenii were converted to Christianity in 1569, but returned to paganism during the Napoleonic wars, in which twelve of them were killed and sixty-three wounded.

The present Mencken is an amateur of military science, and has written a brochure, privately printed, on the Battle of Tannenberg.

He writes very slowly and laboriously, save when writing for newspapers. Then he is highly facile, and can turn out a two-column article in three hours. He has never learned to dictate.

He used to have a mole on the back of his neck, but had it removed in the summer of 1913.

He is not afraid of the dark, or of spiders, or of snakes, or of cats. He likes dogs better than any other animals, and regards them as more respectable than men.

If he could choose another given name it would be Francis.

He owns two hundred acres of land near Innsbruck, in the Tyrol, and will build a bungalow on it after the war.

He is a violent anti-Socialist, as "*Men vs. the Man*" shows, but he reads all the new Socialist books.

In American history the men he most admires are Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, and Cleveland. He has a low opinion of Lincoln, Jackson, and Bryan.

He is handy with horses, and can drive four-in-hand.

He detests cut flowers, carpets, the sea-shore, hotels, zoological gardens, the subway, the Y. M. C. A., literary women, witch hazel, talcum powder, limp leather book-



bindings, aerated waters, bottled beer, low collars, public libraries, and phonographs.

He is a Cockney, and prefers the city to the country.

He never wears tan shoes.

He can swallow castor oil without disgust and without needing a chaser, but he never does so.

Next to Pilsner and Burgundy (or, in wartime, Michelob) his favorite drink is city water direct from the tap — no ice.

He chews cigars.

He is a very fast reader and can get through a two hundred-page book in an hour.

#### IV

So much for my observations and investigations of the two gentlemen, MM. Nathan and Mencken. I have told you, not everything that is known about them, nor even all that I know myself, but enough, I hope, to enable you to conjure up colorable images of them. As I have said, it is by such small and often grotesque lights that character is genuinely illuminated — not by the steady and distorting glare of orthodox biography. It remains for me to tell you how they do their joint work — work which rests upon the apparently perilous basis of an absolute equality of authority, for each owns exactly the same amount of stock in *The Smart Set* Company that the other owns, and each is editor equally with the other, and both derive from the property exactly the same revenue, to a cent.

Their system is very simple and admirably workable. When either, by any internal or external process, generates an idea for the conduct of the magazine, he lays it before the other in all its details. This is always done in writing; never orally. If the other approves the idea he writes upon the brief the words "Nihil obstat," and

it is forthwith executed. If, on the contrary, he disapproves, he indorses it with the word "Veto" and it is returned. The same idea may be revived by its author thirty days later, but not before. If thrice vetoed it is forever banned. The office records for the past three years yield the following:

	Plans Proposed	Approved	Vetoed
By Nathan	18	13	5
By Mencken	12	8	4

In the handling of manuscripts they pursue a somewhat analogous system. Mencken never reads manuscripts while in New York; all such work he does in Baltimore. As the offerings of authors are received in the office they are scrutinized by Nathan's secretary, and the following classes are weeded out and immediately returned:

Mss. written in pencil or with green, purple, or red typewriter ribbons.

Mss. fastened together with ribbons or pins.

Mss. radiating any scent or other odor.

Mss. of plays which begin with soliloquies into a telephone.

Mss. bearing the recommendations of the editors of other magazines.

Mss. accompanied by letters of more than one hundred words.

Mss. accompanied by circulars advertising books written by their authors or by other printed matter.

Mss. of poetry by poets whose names do not appear upon a list in the possession of the secretary.

Once this preliminary clearing out is accomplished, the manuscripts that remain are shipped to Mencken, and he reads them within twenty four hours. Those that he re-

jects are returned to their authors. Those that he approves are returned to Nathan, with the Dano-Norwegian word "bifald," signifying assent, written across the first page of each. They are then read by Nathan, and if he agrees they are purchased and paid for at once. If he disagrees they are returned without further process. Once a manuscript is bought it goes to Mencken a second time, and he reads it again. If he finds that it needs revision in detail, it is turned over to his private secretary and valet, an intelligent Maryland colored man named William F. Beauchamp, a graduate of Harvard. After it has passed through Beauchamp's hands it is set up in type. In case Mencken deems it necessary to reject a manuscript by an author who must be treated politely, he sends it back with a note putting the blame on Nathan. In case Nathan, in like circumstances, votes no, he blames it upon Mencken. This, of course, is lying, but in the long run it amounts to the truth. The two never discuss manuscripts; they simply vote. They never buy anything from personal friends. They have a strict agreement, in fact, that each will automatically veto anything sent in by an author with whom he is on good terms. This agreement is never violated. Nathan, for example, has a brother who, under a *nom de plume*, is a frequent contributor to the leading magazines, but is barred from *The Smart Set* by the relationship. In the same way Mencken was, until recently, the intimate friend and confidant of an eminent woman novelist, but her work has never appeared in *The Smart Set*.

When Mencken is in New York, he and Nathan meet at *The Smart Set* office every day, including Sunday, at 10 A.M., and spend two hours discussing the minor business of the magazine. At noon they proceed to Delmonico's and have luncheon, returning at 3 P.M. They finish all business by 4:30, when they leave the office. They often dine together and spend the evening together,

but they never discuss office matters at such times. They never invite authors to luncheon or dinner and never accept invitations from them. They never attend literary parties or visit studios. They are not acquainted with any of the literary lions of New York, saving only Dreiser and Huneker.

Thus these meritorious *redacteurs* live and have their being. Neither belongs to a literary clique; neither subscribes to a clipping bureau; neither ever sits on a committee or joins a movement; neither needs money; neither ever borrows anything or asks a favor; neither is accountable to anyone; neither is ever indignant; neither gives a damn.







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PS3527 Mencken, Henry Louis, 1880-1956.

A72 Pistols for two, by Owen Hatteras (*pseud.*) New York, A.  
Z8 A. Knopf, 1917.

3 p. l., 42 p. 19<sup>cm</sup>.

Owen Hatteras is the pseudonym of H. L. Mencken and G. J. Nathan. The book contains a biography of Nathan, introductory and closing remarks by Mencken and a biography of Mencken by Nathan. cf. Frey, Carroll. A bibliography of the writings of H. L. Mencken, Philadelphia, 1924, p. 41-42.

- ✓ 1. Nathan, George Jean, 1882-1958. 2. Mencken, Henry Louis, 1880-1956.  
✓ 1. Nathan, George Jean, 1882-1958. II. Title.

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